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MUS
STANFORD

FALSTAFF

A LYRICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

ARRIGO BOITO

(English Version by W. Beatty Kingston)

MUSIC BY

GIUSEPPE VERDI
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
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SYNOPSIS

SCENE I

ACT I.

Falstaff is seen enjoying himself in his inn at Windsor, attended by Bardolph and Pistol. He has just written a couple of love letters to two sprightly gentlewomen of the town, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page. Neither of his attendants cares to play the part of go-between in the affair, and a boy, Robin, is sent to bear the missives. Enter Dr. Caius, who complains he has been robbed by Bardolph and Pistol.

SCENE II

A garden of Ford's house. Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page meet together with Dame Quickly. They compare notes and find that Falstaff's letters are precisely in the same language. They decide upon some way of revenge on the fat knight. Fenton is in love with Anne, and they meet and exchange mutual vows. Anne complains that her father wants her to marry Dr. Caius, but her mother promises she shall have the man of her choice. Bardolph and Pistol come and tell Ford of Falstaff's designs on his wife and Ford resolves to have his vengeance too. It is arranged that he shall be introduced to Falstaff under a false name. The women arrange that Dame Quickly shall go to Falstaff and make an appointment for him to meet them on the morrow.

SCENE I

ACT II.

Falstaff is at an inn, and Dame Quickly comes with the note making the appointment between two and three o'clock for that day. The knight is overjoyed. Ford is announced under the name of Fountain. He pretends he has come to ask Falstaff to aid him in his hopeless quest of Mrs. Ford. Falstaff agrees to help him all the more, as he has an appointment with the lady for that afternoon, while her husband is away. This news astounds Ford, who believes that his wife is deceiving him after all. He raves with jealousy, whilst Falstaff goes to don his best attire. They leave together.

SCENE II

In Ford's house. The women have prepared everything for Falstaff's reception. Two servants enter, carrying a basket full of dirty linen. The fat knight arrives and immediately begins making love to Mistress Ford. She alternately encourages and repulses him, until Dame Quickly bustles in to say that Ford is coming in great haste. She thinks it is only an alarm meant for Falstaff, but finds it is only too true. She conceals the knight behind the screen, as Ford's voice is heard. He enters with Caius, Bardolph and Pistol, giving orders to search everywhere for the scoundrel. He himself examines the basket and then rushes out frantic. As he does this, Falstaff runs from behind the screen and squeezes into the basket, while Dame Quickly and Mrs. Ford cover him with the soiled linen. Fenton now comes in with Anne, and to be able to talk quietly they hide behind the screen. Ford and the others return and continue looking for Falstaff. Ford pitches on the screen as the place of hiding, and they surround and overturn it, only to their disgust to find the young lovers. The men again rush off looking for Falstaff, who, half suffocated, implodes to be released. Mrs. Ford then calls the servants to carry the basket away. They take it to the window, balance it a moment, then throw it into the river. A loud shout is heard and Mrs. Ford takes her husband to the window to show him the fate of the gallant knight.

SCENE I

ACT III.

Dame Quickly comes to the inn to express to Sir John the sorrow of Mrs. Ford over the occurrences of the day and to make a new appointment with him in Windsor Forest that night. The vain old knight falls into the trap again. The three other women overhear the conversation and make their plans, and Ford is taken into the secret this time. Dame Quickly then hears Ford promise Dr. Caius to let him have Anne as wife, immediately. She runs and tells the others.

SCENE II

Windsor Park. Fenton and Anne arrive and pledge anew their vows. Mrs. Ford then arrives and puts a mask and cloak on Fenton. Dame Quickly is invested with a broomstick. Falstaff now comes on the scene and meets Mrs. Ford. He begins his protestations of undying love, but they are interrupted by Mistress Page, who, rushing in, cries that witches are coming. Sir John betrays the most abject fear and falls to the ground, burying his face, and the fairies enter led by Nan. Then Bardolph, Pistol, Ford, and the others fall upon Falstaff and belabor him with blows, until he cries for mercy; but in the melee he recognizes Bardolph and this restores his courage. Then Falstaff owns up to his errors, and Ford and he make friends. Bardolph comes in as the Fairy Queen, hand in hand with Dr. Caius, and Mrs. Ford leads forth Anne disguised as a nymph, and Fenton in his cloak and mask. Ford unites the two couples. They then all unmask to the astonishment of Dr. Caius and to the grief of Ford, who finds he has married his daughter to the wrong man. However, he relents when he finds that there are other dupes besides himself.

Ford embraces Anne and Fenton and all the characters and the chorus join in the finale:

"Jesting is man's vocation;
Wise is he who is jolly,
Ready to laugh upon slight provocation,
Proof against dull melancholy.
Each man makes fun of his neighbor
The merry world around:—
Solace for pain and for labor
In gay laughter is found!"

CURTAIN

CHARACTERS

Sir JOHN FALSTAFF	Baritone	
FENTON, a young gentleman	Tenor	
FORD, a wealthy burgher	Baritone	
Dr. CAIUS, a physician.	Tenor	
BARDOLF . . . }	followers of Falstaff }	Tenor
PISTOL . . . }		Bass
ROBIN, a page in Ford's household		
Mistress FORD		Soprano
ANNE, her daughter		Soprano
Mistress PAGE		Mezzo-Soprano
Dame QUICKLY		Mezzo-Soprano

Burghers and street-folk, Ford's servants, maskers,
as elves, fairies, witches, &c.

SCENE—WINDSOR.

TIME—REIGN OF KING HENRY IV.

This comedy is derived from Shakespeare's "MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR," and from certain passages of "HENRY IV" having relation to the personality of Falstaff.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

INTERIOR OF "THE GARTER" INN.

Table, large arm-chair and bench. On the table remains of a morning meal, several bottles and a glass inkstand, pens, paper, a lighted candle. Broom leaning against the wall. Exit C, door L.

FALSTAFF, seated at the table, heats sealing-wax at the candle-flame, and with a signet-ring seals two letters; then blows out light, stretches himself out on his chair, and begins to drink at his ease.

BARDOLPH, **PISTOL** and Host in attendance.

Enter DR. CAIUS, L., exclaiming angrily :--

CAIUS Falstaff !

FALST. (summons Host, taking no notice of Caius)
Mine host!

CAIUS (louder than before)
Sir John Falstaff !

BARD. What is it ails you.?

CAIUS You have beaten my servants...

FALST. Hither another flask of sherry.

CAIUS You have ridden to death my fav'rite hackney; my house you've broken into...

FALST. But spared your fair housekeeper.

FALSTAFF

CAIUS Thanks for nothing; such a blear-eyed old creature! Corpulent Captain! An you were twenty times the doughty knight, John Falstaff, I'd force you to reply to me.

FALST. Hear, then, my final answer: I've done all you complain of; such was my pleasure.

CAIUS I will appeal to the Council of State.

FALST. Let well alone, sir; a laughing-stock you'll be else; such is my friendly counsel.

CAIUS It shall not end thus!

FALST. Away with you!

CAIUS Thou Bardolph!

BARD. Learned Doctor.

CAIUS Last night we drank together.

BARD. Too deeply! Sorely I've suffered all day. I prithee write me a prescription; my stomach's out of order. Accursed be the rogues who drug their liquors! See'st thou this glowing meteor? (pointing to his nose.)

CAIUS I see it.

BARD. Night after night, thus ruddy of hue it reposes!

CAIUS (violently)
Prescription for the gallows! Thou mad'st me drink, thou villain, with him (pointing to Pistol), old stories telling, and, when my brains were fuddled quite, then you both picked my pockets.

BARD. Not I!

CAIUS Who then?

FALST. Was't thou who emptied the pockets of this worthy?

CAIUS Truly, 'twas he! Behold it, that liar's face, assuming a leer of false denial! (turning out one of his pockets.)

Herein were shillings twain
Of good King Edward's reign,
And six mill-groats of silver,
All which these knaves did pilfer!

FALSTAFF

PIST. Sir John, I crave your leave to fight him with this wooden weapon! (brandishing the broom) (to Caius) I defy thee!

CAIUS Plebeian! Insult a man of breeding!

PIST. Blockhead!

CAIUS Vile beggar!

PIST. Rascal!

CAIUS Dog!

PIST. Brute!

CAIUS Thou scarecrow!

PIST. Pick-thank!

CAIUS Foul blossom of mandragora!

PIST. Who?

CAIUS Thou!

PIST. Repeat it!

CAIUS Aye!

PIST. Be off, then! (attacking Caius)

FALST. (checking Pistol with a gesture)

• What ho! Pistol! Bluster and brawl not here! (to Bardolph) Good Bardolph, who was't that emptied the pockets of this worthy?

CAIUS. 'Twas one or both of them?

FALST. See this toper (pointing to Caius smilingly), who, drinking deeply, stupefies his seven senses, and then tells us a fable which, very like, he dreamt while asleep under the table. (To Caius) Harken, and pray collect yourself. The truth has now been told you. Disproved your accusations, depart—and drink no more!

CAIUS Hear me!

If I ever again get drunk in strange society

'Twill be with honest people, pious and noted for sobriety. (Exit L.)

BARD., PIST. (beating time as they escort Caius to the door)
AMEN!

FALST. Cease your antiphonals; ye drone them out of tune. Virtue lies in this axiom: *Steal gently and opportunely.* Ye are but clumsy craftsmen.

BARD., PIST. (as before)
AMEN!

FALST. Hush! (looking over Host's reckoning) *Six pullets: six shillings. Thirty flagons of sherry: two nobles, three good groats.* (throwing his purse at Bardolph) What is left in my purse? (reading the reckoning) *A brace of pheasants. An anchovy.*

FALSTAFF

BARD. (emptying the purse and counting its contents on the table.)

One mark, one penny.

FALST. Rummage, rummage!

BARD. I've rummaged! (throws down the purse) Here's not another siver!

FALST. Varlet, thou art my ruin. Week in, week out, I spend a matter of ten guineas. Foul toper!

(COUPLETS)

As from inn to inn we wander,
Nightly staggering as best we may,
Thy proboscis yields a lurid light
That serves to guide me on my way.
But what I save in lamp-oil
I waste on thee in wine;
For thirty long years I have nourished
That purple spongy nose of thine!
Thou'rt too costly. (to Pistol) And thou also. (to Host)
House there! bring hither a flagon.

(to Bardolph and Pistol)

On my substance ye batten;
Should Falstaff cease to fatten
No man would fear, no woman love me;
For this fair roundness wins me fame and success in the
realms of Mars and Venus.

PIST. Falstaff the mighty!

BARD. Stupendous Falstaff!

FALST. (contemplating and shaking his paunch)
This it my kingdom; I will increase it.

PIST., BARD.

Stupendous Falstaff!

FALST. But now 'tis time our wits to sharpen.

BARD., PIST.

And so we will!

FALST. Say, do ye know a Windsor tradesman whose name is Ford?

BARD., PIST.

Yes, yes.

FALST. A man of influence and wealth is he...

PIST. More generous than Cræsus.

BARD. A Prince!

FALST. A handsome wife hath he.

PIST. Who keeps the strong-box key.

FALST. 'Tis she, 'tis she!

Oh! love with starlike eyes and swanlike throat,
And lips like flow'rs, like scarlet laughing flow'rs!

FALSTAFF

Her name is Alice. One morning, as I passed by
beneath her open window,
She smiled. Love's ardour kindled in my heart,
The goddess from her eye discharged a burning dart
At me, at me ! at this vast bosom of huge calibre, this
well-turned leg and comely figure, stalwart, capa-
cious ! And her desire revealed itself so plainly in
her glances—they seemed to say, *I love thee, Sir
John Falstaff.*

BARD. Just so !

FALST. Another there is, too.

BARD., PIST.

Another !

FALST. And Margery is her sweet name.

PIST. They call her Meg.

FALST. She also by my charms is subjugated, and she, too, has
the keeping of the strong-box.

BARD., PIST.

Of the strong-box !

FALST. These beauties shall stand me in good
stead as my Golconda and my Gold Coast.
Behold me ! I still may claim to be
a pleasant summer of Saint Martin ?
Two fervid letters ye shall carry.

Convey thou this to Meg ; her virtue ^(giving one to Bardolph) let us test. With
zeal, I see, thy nose burns like a beacon. (to Pistol,
giving the other letter) And thou, carry this to fair
Alice.

PIST. Shall I by my side wear steel, and play the part of Pan-
darus ? No, no !

FALST. Paltry rascal ! (with calm contempt)

BARD. (throwing down the letter)

Sir John, in this intrigue to aid you I'm forbidden, and
strictly.

FALST. By whom ?

BARD. My honour !

FALST. Ho ! page-boy. (To Bardolph and Pistol.) Be off and
hang yourselves—but not on me ! (To page) The
letters—take them—for two fair ladies. Convey
them quickly ; hurry, fly, hasten, go briskly, go, go,
go ! (To Bardolph and Pistol) Your honour !—

Ruffians ! ye dare to prate about your honour. Ye !
Ye sinks of sin and vileness ; when 'tis not always we
Can keep our own untainted ! E'en I, Sirs, yes, I, I,
Must now and then petition Heaven to close an eye,
And am myself constrained to pawn my honour ; to hamper
My discourse with lies and stratagems ; with the truth
to tamper.

And ye, with ragged doublets, vile grins and foul grimaces,
Like filthy pole-cats; your vices plainly stamped upon
your dirty faces;

Of honour boast! Of honour! What honour? What humbug!
What rubbish! say, can honour fill a paunch that is
empty? No! Can it mend a leg or an arm that is
broken? No! A finger? No! A thumbnail? No! Nor
a feather? No!

For honour's not a surgeon. What is it? A mere ex-
pression. Of what is honour compounded? Of invisible
ether. Grand invention! Hath he it, he who died o'
Thursday? No! Lives it with the living? Neither;
because alas! human vanity corrupts it, human pride
undermines it, and calumny destroys it. As for me, I
will none on't, no! But to return to you, ye scoundrels,
too oft forgiven—I now dismiss ye! (seizes the broom
and furiously drives them out).

Begone, swiftly, briskly, hurry-scurry!
From the halter 'tis time you should swing!
Vanish swiftly, hurry-scurry! Brigands!
Bandits! Robbers! Rascals! hie away!

(Exeunt Bardolph and Pistol L., followed by Falstaff)

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE II.

A GARDEN.

Ford's house L. Trees.

ALICE, ANNE, MEG, DAME QUICKLY, MR. FORD, FENTON,
DR. CAIUS, BARDOLPH, PISTOL.

*C. Enter MISTRESS PAGE and DAME QUICKLY R. crossing towards
Ford's house, on the threshold of which they meet MISTRESS
FORD and ANNE, just coming out.*

MRS. PAGE Alice.

MRS. FORD Meg.

MRS. PAGE Nannie.

MRS. FORD (to Mrs. Page)

I fain would walk and talk, and laugh and jest with thee,
(to Dame Quickly) Good day, kind gossip.

QUICK. Heav'n give ye both good cheer! (stroking Anne's
cheeks) Sweet, blushing rose-bud!

MRS. FORD (to Mrs. Page) Thou comest aptly. Something
surprising has just happened to me.

MRS. PAGE And to me.

QUICK. What?

ANNE What is it?

MRS. FORD Tell us your story.

MRS. PAGE Tell us yours.

ANNE Tell us, pray tell us!

QUICK. Tell us, tell us.

MRS. FORD But promise it shall no further go!

MRS. PAGE Of course not!

QUICK. Why, no—of course not!

MRS. FORD Hear, then. Could I be persuaded to yield to vile
temptations of the Evil One, I might be advanced
to the station of—a Knight's gay Lady!

MRS. PAGE And I too.

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD Nonsense !

MRS. PAGE (searching her pocket for a letter)

No more, I pray you. We may not waste all the morning in chatter! (Brings out the letter) I've a letter.

MRS. FORD I also (gives letter to Mrs. PAGE). Read it.

MRS. PAGE (gives her letter to Mrs. Ford)

Read it. (reads Mrs. Ford's letter) *Resplendent Alice! my love I tender...* How is this? What does he say? Barring the name, the words are the same !

MRS. FORD (reading Mrs. Page's letter)

Resplendent Meg! my love I tender...

MRS. PAGE *Love I long for* (continuing to read)

MRS. FORD Here Meg, there Alice.

MRS. PAGE One and the same. (reads from letter)- *Ah! do not ask me why, but say, I...*

MRS. FORD (continuing from the other letter)

love thee! Why thus insulted am I?

MRS. PAGE The thing is strangely perplexing.

QUICK. Let's read it calmly !

MRS. PAGE The selfsame verses.

MRS. FORD The selfsame paper.

QUICK. The same hand-writing.

ANNE The same escutcheon.

MRS. PAGE and MRS. FORD (read together)

*Thou'rt a gay merry gossip, I'm brisk and supple,
So we two rightly are meant to make a couple. Aye!*

ANNE He, she, thee.

QUICK. A pair in three!

MRS. FORD (reading as before)

*Let us be coupled in Cupid's roseate fetters,
A lovely woman, a man who has few betters!
And thy bright visage on me shall shed its light
Like some sweet star that sparkles all the night.*

(all laugh)

Reply to your esquire,

John Falstaff, Knight of the Shire.

ALL Monster !

MRS. FORD

He must be punished !

ANNE

And that severely.

MRS. FORD

Right merrily we'll fool him !

ANNE

I'd like to, dearly !

MRS. PAGE

We will spite him !

QUICK.

And affright him !

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD

Though shaped like a barrel
He fain would be courting,
His carcase disporting
In splendid apparel.
In spite of the grease
From his fat hide that oozes,
To leave us in peace
He perversely refuses.
He cannot escape
From the pitfall we'll set him,
Nor out of the scrape
Into which we will get him;
For if I entice him,
That hogshead of fat,
I'll handsomely trice him;
Pray trust me for that!

MRS. PAGE

That bird of ill-omen
Not long here shall tarry
Away he must carry
His ugly abdomen.
With smile and with wile
And with subtle delusion
The wretch we'll beguile
To his utter confusion.
His hopes we must flatter,
Encourage his wooing,
Then utterly shatter
And work his undoing.
When we lay the lash on
He'll roar like a bull,
And then his hot passion
Will speedily cool.

ANNE

Your debt you must pay him
A trick we must play him
Deceive and betray him
Perplex and effray him.
The trap we prepare
Will be cunning baited,
Once caught in our snare
He will find himself mated!
The jest must succeed
As we're all of us in it;
I'm longing, indeed,
Straight away to begin it.
Our nets shall involve him
And then 'twill go hard
But we will dissolve him,
That bladder of lard!

DAME QUICKLY

A mountain of batter!
No hog could be fatter
Your hand should he take it,
To pieces he'd break it,
In vain the dull booby
To woo may endeavour,
For such a fat looby
You're vastly too clever,
Your eyes and lips scatter
Whole flights of keen arrows
Your tongues make more clatter
Than legions of sparrows.
Life half of its pleasure
From laughter derives,
So laugh without measure
Like true Merry Wives!

(all together)

The barrel! The hogshead! The hogshead! The barrel!

(Exeunt Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page, Anne and Dame Quickly, L., reappearing
among the trees at back of stage, but unnoticed by men).

FALSTAFF

Enter Ford, Caius, Fenton, Bardolph and
Pistol, R., and form group in front of stage

(all four speaking to Ford)

FENTON

There is naught that would delight me
More than bringing him to reason
By a few sharp "words in season"
Or by forcing him to fight me.
Twere an exploit anatomical
To reduce his corporation
By judicious perforation;—
The result would, sure, be comical!
Good advice I'll offer to him
When I meet him face to face;
And I'll drive my dagger through him,
If he fail to keep his place!

DR. CAIUS

He's a living shame and scandal
He's a Pagan, Turk and Vandal,
'Tother day he broke my door down,
Knocked my servants on the floor down.
While he haunts this globe supernal
'Twere in vain to try to mend him.
So the best thing is to send him
Once for all to realms infernal.
And his two degraded satraps,
Who their chief would fain betray,
Are a brace of greedy rat-traps,
Ever gaping for their prey!

BARDOLPH

My corrupt and bloated master
(Fate through me your night illuminates)
Fat Jack Falstaff surely ruminates
Projects big with dread disaster
I'm a soldier, and this tumour
Shall not tempt me to ebriety,
Nor to cloak his impropriety
Which agrees not with my humour!
Master Ford, my timely warning
Lay to heart without delay,
Shape your plans this very morning
Take your measures while you may!

PISTOL

Falstaff means to use you vilely,
This I tell you in pure amity;
If you prove not bold and wily
You will scarce avert calamity.
Master Ford, I once was renitent,
Falstaff wrought my degradation;
Now I'm humble, meek and penitent,
Striving to deserve salvation!
As you know the truth completely,
Ev'ry wise precaution take,
Use your eyes and ears discreetly,
'Tis your honour that's at stake!

FORD

(breaks from the group. Aside).

In my ears foul fiends are muttering
Fancies fraught with fear and wonder
O'er my head dark clouds are spluttering
Lightning flashes, growls of thunder,
Horrid thoughts, my reason shattering.
Give my fears no intermission,
And the tales these rogues are shattering,
Drive me mad with grim suspicion,
Of these four I know not whether
This or that one I should heed;
If they'd not all speak together
I should hold them friends indeed!

FALSTAFF

FORD (to Pistol)

Say on, friend!

PIST. (to Ford)

To speak plainly,
Sir John! that imp ungainly,
Would, like a roaring billow,
Engulf your hoarded treasure
To serve his carnal pleasure
And—eke usurp your pillow!

CAIUS Great Heaven!

FORD I'm abused!

BARD. He has sent her a letter

PIST. (interrupting) Of which to be the bearer
I refused!

BARD. I refused!

PIST. Beware, Beware!

BARD. Beware!

PIST. He ogles all the women, good looking or uncomely, ripe
matrons or young maidens.

BARD. See, the tynes that adorn Acteon's hairy forehead, from
yours sprouting!

FORD What do you mean by that?

BARD. The Antlers! (under his breath)

FORD Horrible word!

CAIUS A vast appetite has this wicked old Knight.

FORD My wife I'll keep my eye on; her gallant I'll look after;

(enter the four women, &c.)

I'll have no courtier fine
Lay hand on what is mine!

ANNE (seeing Fenton)

'Tis he!

FENT. (seeing Anne)

'Tis she!

MRS. FORD (seeing Ford)

'Tis he!

FORD (seeing Mrs. Ford)

'Tis she!

CAIUS (pointing at Mrs. Ford)

'Tis she!

MRS. PAGE (pointing at Ford)

'Tis he!

MRS. FORD (pointing to Ford)

If he should know it!

ANNE Nonsense!

MRS. FORD Let's keep out of his way!

MRS. PAGE Ford then is jealous?

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD Yes, rather! (Exeunt Ford, Caius, Bardolph and Pistol, R. Fenton remains.)

QUICK! Silence!

MRS. FORD Away, away! (Exeunt Mrs. Page, Mrs. Ford, Dame Quickly L. Anne remains)



FENT. Ss! Ss! My Nannie, hither!

ANNE Silence! What is't?

FENT. Two kisses!

ANNE But quickly!

FENT. Yes, quickly!

(Duet)

ANNE Lips by commotion

FENT. Kissing with passion

ANNE Teach the sweet fashion
Of love's emotion

FENT. Lips that are posies
Precious pearls hiding,
Tempting and chiding
Thefts of their roses.
Kissing's a duty (trying to kiss her)

ANNE Audacious creature! (keeping him off)

FENT. Thine ev'ry feature
Is rife with beauty.

(rec.) Kiss me!

ANNE (rec.) Imprudent, no!

FENT. (rec.) Yes, two kisses!

ANNE (rec.) Leave me! (disengaging herself)

FENT. (rec.) Ah! how I love thee!

ANNE. (rec.) They're coming! (They separate; Fenton hides among trees.)

FENT. (cantando) *Kissing is fraught with an exquisite pleasure!*

ANNE (cantando) *Bliss never palling, and sweet beyond measure!*

(Enter Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page and Dame Quickly; Anne remains up stage.)



FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD Falstaff would fain befool me.

MRS. PAGE Heavily he shall rue it!

MRS. FORD Say, shall I write a letter?

ANNE A messenger were better.

(joining them)

ALL Yes!

MRS. FORD (to Dame quickly)

Seek thou the ruffian at his inn, and offer to arrange a private appointment with me.

QUICK. Excellent notion!

ANNE Cunning contrivance!

MRS. FORD Thus and thus only, to our snare we may entice him.

ANNE And then...

MRS. FORD And then a pretty trick we'll play him!

QUICK. Without the least compunction.

ANNE The monster!

MRS. PAGE The impudent old rascal!

MRS. FORD The mountain of tallow!

MRS. PAGE He merits no compassion—

MRS. FORD He's a glutton who squanders all that he has in gorging.

ANNE We'll souse him in the river.

MRS. FORD We'll roast him at a fire.

ALL Delightful, enchanting!

MRS. PAGE We count on you to play your part full featly. (to Dame quickly.)

QUICK (catching sight of Fenton, who is moving about among trees, C.)
A footstep!

MRS. PAGE There's some one on us spying!

(Exeunt hurriedly R. Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page, Anne and Dame Quickly.)



FENT. (approaching Anne)

Once more I challenge.

ANNE (keeping him off)

Once more I defy thee!

Attack then!

FENT. (trying to kiss her) Parry!

ANNE (covering her face with one hand, which Fenton kisses)

'Too high you're aiming!

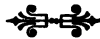
'Tis thus, in Love's soft duel

That strength is gentle and merciful,

Weakness, more cruel!

FALSTAFF

FENT. Love is an archer who never misses.
ANNE. Lips are his bowstrings,
FENT. His shafts are kisses.
Guard thee, sweet maid, 'gainst my fond caresses ;
Thus wildly lavished on thy fair tresses.
(he kisses a lock of her hair.)
ANNE (coiling the tress round his neck)
Thou art my captive !
FENT. Quarter I plead for !
ANNE I, too, am wounded ; but thou art vanquished !
FENT. For peace I sue ! A truce let us settle, and then...
ANNE And then ?
FENT. Resume our gentle warfare !
ANNE Happy the combat that injures no one ! Vanish !
FENT. My beloved !
ANNE They're coming ! Farewell ! (runs off, R.)
FENT. (retreating up stage C.)
Kissing is fraught with an exquisite pleasure !
ANNE (from within, R.)
Bliss never palling, and sweet beyond measure !
(Enter C., Ford, Calus, Bardolph and Pistol. Fenton presently joins the group.)



BARD. (to Ford)
To his longwinded speeches I've often been a martyr.
FORD You said that he was lodging... where then ?
PIST. In
Windsor, at the *Garter*.
FORD. Go ask him to receive me,
Call me by another name ;
Yourself shall watch the game,
I'll make it worth your while, believe me !
You'll keep my secret closely.
BARD. The grave is not more silent. I am Bardolph the Faithful
PIST. I am Pistol the Trusty !
FORD. We're agreed, then —
BARD. Our honour is deeply pledged.
PIST. I'm deaf and speechless.
FORD. We all are well agreed. Hands upon it !
BARD. and PIST.
Yes !

ACT II.

SCENE I.

ROOM IN THE GARTER INN.

As in Act I, Scene I.

FALSTAFF *as before, stretched out in an armchair, drinking sack.* **BARDOLPH** and **PISTOL** *at back of stage, near entrance L.*

BARD. and PIST. (together, beating their breasts penitently)
We implore you to forgive us !

FALST. (indifferently)
Rascals hark back to vice, like cats to the cream-jug.

BARD. and PIST.
We are once more your humble servants !

BARD. (to Falstaff)
Sir Knight, here is an aged dame who fain would have access to your worshipful presence.

FALST. Admit her ! (exit and re-enters, conducting Dame Quickly)

QUICK. (courtseying deeply to F. who remains seated)
Sir, fair greeting !

FALST. God save you, worthy woman !

QUICK. Sir, fair greeting ! (approaches him respectfully) If it should please your worship to give me private hearing, something I have to tell you.

FALST. I grant thee audience. (To Bardolph and Pistol, who go out making grimaces) Retire !

QUICK. (courtseys again, approaching still nearer)
Sir, fair greeting ! (hesitating) I come from Mistress Ford...

FALST. Well ? (rising and hastily approaching Dame Quickly)

FALSTAFF

QUICK. Alas, unhappy lady! You're a wicked seducer!

FALST. I am! Continue.

QUICK. Her mind is bewildered and distracted by love of you.
She bids me say that your letter reached her; she
thanks you for it; and her husband is absent from home
daily, from two until three.

FALST. From two until three!

QUICK. At that hour your noble Worship may seek her in her
dwelling without the slightest danger of interruption.
Unhappy lady! Her griefs and troubles are distressing,
for her husband is jealous.

FALST. From two until three... Say that I the hour await with
loving impatience, and that her tryst I'll surely keep.

QUICK. I'll tell her. I've another commission for your Wor-
ship...

FALST. Impart it!

QUICK. Fair Mistress Page (an angel of grace, whom to see is to
worship); she also bids me bring you loving and tender
greeting. Sad 'tis to say, her watchful spouse from
home is seldom absent! Unhappy lady! A snow-
white lily of candour and truth! How is't you thus
bewitch them?

FALST. No witchcraft I employ. The only charms I exercise
are my own. Tell me: has each one kept her own
secret?

QUICK. Surely! We women keep our counsel. Fear no prating.

FALST. (feeling in his purse)
Service merits just reward.

QUICK. Who soweth brave bounty shall harvest love!

FALST. (Giving money to Dame Q.)
Glean then, thou female Mercury! (dismissing her by a
wave of the hand.) Be sure thou greet my charmers!

QUICK. Your servant! (Exit L.)



FALST. She's mine, she's mine! Go thy way, Jack
Falstaff, go thy way.

FALSTAFF

This battered hulk of thine, 'spite wind and weather,
Still yields some joy to thee,
For all the women, old and young together,
Are mad with love for me!
Good body mine, the which I amply nourish,
Long may'st thou flourish!

BARD. (Enter L.)

Sir Knight, here is a certain Master Brook who greatly
covets your discourse. A demijohn of Cyprus doth he
proffer, wherewith to wet Your Worship's whistle.

FALST. Said'st thou Brook was his name?

BARD. Aye!

FALST. Welcome be that brook which ever floweth
With grape-juice, wheresoe'er it goeth!
Hither (exit Bardolph). Go thy way, Jack Falstaff, go
thy way!

(Enter Ford in disguise, preceded by Bardolph, bowing, and followed by Pistol, carrying a
runlet of wine. Pistol and Bardolph retire up stage. Ford is carrying a bag of money.)

FORD Sir Knight (approaches Falstaff, bowing profoundly),
Heaven's grace be with you!

FALST. (Returning his salute.)
With you, worthy sir, no less so.

FORD For what may appear an indiscretion, I must crave your
forgiveness, if thus uncereemoniously I venture to ap-
proach you without letters of credence.

FALST. Be sure that you are welcome!

FORD In me you see a man who is full well provided
With store of earthly treasure;
A man who spends his wealth by whim and fancy guided
To gratify his pleasure.
Master Brook is my name.

FALST. (Cordially pressing his hand.)
Excellent Master Brook, I desire to make your intimate
acquaintance.

FORD Gallant Sir John! In confidence a favour I would ask you.

BARD. (To Pistol under his breath.)
Attention!

PIST. (To Bardolph similarly.)
Silence!

BARD. Listen! I'll wager that he will tumble into the pitfall.

PIST. Ford will inveigle him.

TOGETHER.
Silence!

FALSTAFF

FALST. What do'ye here? (exeunt Bardolf and Pistol) I listen
(to Ford).

FORD Sir John, let me remind you of a popular proverb, old as
Time: "Of bright gold is the key that opes ev'ry
portal." For gold's a mighty talisman, a spell to which
the proudest yield.

FALST. Gold is a masterful warrior well used to conquest...

FORD (approaching the table)

Well, well, sir; this bag of coin I carry too heavy is for
me. Sir John, your kind assistance lend, its weight to
diminish.

FALST. I'll not refuse (taking the bag and placing it on the table).
But tell me why and how I have deserved this bounty...

FORD Hearken, I pray.

In Windsor lives a lady; fair is she! ripe and mellow;
Her name is Alice; her husband, a certain Ford...

FALST.

Poor fellow.

FORD I love her, she cares not for me; I write to her, she does
not answer; I gaze on her, she will not look at me; I
seek her and she conceals herself. On her I've
squandered treasures, rich gifts on her I've lavished; a
thousand plans I have concocted to gain her gracious
favour. Alas! all was in vain. I still await Love's
guerdon; and this is of my sad ditty the melancholy
burden.

FALST. (gaily singing.)

*This love, this love is ev'ry man's undoing.
While he has breath and being,*

FORD 'Tis like a shadow, him who flees pursuing,

FALST. *And whom pursues it, fleeing.*

This love! This love!

FORD *Thus runs the dismal ditty*

I've dearly paid to learn;

FALST. *And such the fate of wooers*

Whose love finds no return!

FORD *This love, this love is ev'ry man's undoing.*

FALST. (interrupting)

She holds out no hope or prospect of yielding?

FORD No!

FALST. And why do you apply to me?

FORD I'll tell you now:—

You are a man of breeding, prowess, discretion, invention,
A man of mighty mettle and courtly apprehension!

FALSTAFF

FALST. (deprecatingly) Oh!

FORD 'Tis so, truly; and here is good red gold in plenty: at your pleasure

Dispose of it, aye, and scatter it freely, without stint or measure.

All my wealth you shall squander;

All that I ask you is to subdue that fair one yonder!

FALST. A strange request!

FORD Pray hear me:—that cold divinity.

Till now has ever lived in great repute of chastity.

Her virtuous austerities persistently defy me,

Her haughty, scornful glances seem to say, *Dare to come nigh me!*

But if your suit should win her

Mine may succeed some day;

One fault oft breeds another,

And then... What do you say! (a long pause)

FALST. Before all else, without the least compunction, good sir, your gold I'll pocket, pledging my knightly word (my hand upon it) (squeezing Ford's hand) that I will satisfy your longings. This dull Ford's lovely wife, fair Alice, shall be yours!

FORD I thank you!

FALST. Her favour I'm assured of; I stand supreme in her good graces;

She hath consented to yield to my embraces.

FORD (violently) Who?

FALST. (calmly)

Kind Alice! Hither this very day, she sent me a message to tell me that from home her blockhead of a husband is absent, between two and three.

FORD (spoken)

Between two and three... (sung) Pray, do you know him?

FALST. Not I! the foul fiend may take him, for me, to join Menelaus, his ancestor! I'll worry him! I'll flurry him! yes, yes; take heed, fair Sir, and you shall see how I'll bamboozle him neatly, featly!

Should he prove froward,

A skinful of sore bones he'll get from me, the paltry coward!

He's but a beast of burden; give heed how I'll perplex him;

Give heed how I will vex him!

Await me; I will but don somewhat braver garments.

(exit C, carrying the bag of money with him).

FORD (rec.)

Am I awake or do I dream?

By visions dire and dread my soul's affrighted,

(rec.) Am I dreaming?

Master Ford, arouse thee! Nincompoop! Wretch benighted.

FALSTAFF

Thy wife is faithless ; her shame and degradation,
Have wrecked thy home, thine honour, reputation !
Fixed is the hour—prepared the betrayal—

Thou'rt the butt of the city !
Thy friends will say all
That a husband befooled deserves no pity !
I seem to hear murmurs of reprobation,
Scorning my folly, deriding my delusion !
Oh ! consternation !
Confusion !

Death and damnation !
(*rec.*) Let none but blockheads put faith in their spouses !
For I would trust my best nag to a coper,
And to a highwayman my hoarded pelf,
My flask of Nantz to an insatiate toper,
But not my wife unto herself !
Oh ! cruel fortune ! of all gladness
And hope my life's denuded !

Deluded
Dullard ! Poor dupe ! Insensate ninny !
Deluded !

But thou shalt not escape, no ! ruffian, traitor,
Accursed rogue and faitour !

First I'll bewray him,
And flay him,
Then slay him !

I will avenge this outrage ; though I be scorned and
spited,
My deadly wrong shall fully be requited !

(*Enter Falstaff wearing a new doublet, hat and cane.*)

FALST. Good Master Brook, I'm ready. To saunter are you
minded ?

FORD Right gladly I'll walk with you.

FALST. Pray pass first.

FORD Nay, Sir, you.

FALST. No, no ; this is my poor dwelling. Precede me.

FORD Pray pass.

FALST. 'Tis late, Sir ; my rendez-vous is urgent.

FORD No compliments, I beg you.

FALST. Pass first then !

FORD Excuse me.

FALST. I pray you !

FORD Excuse me.

FALST. Well, well, we'll go together ! (*exeunt arm in arm.*)

END OF SCENE I.—ACT II.

SCENE II.

A room in Ford's house.

Large window C. at back of stage, from which garden is visible. Doors R. C., R. and L. Staircases R. and L. A closed screen leaning against wall L., close by a huge fireplace. Large cupboard against wall R. Table, wooden chair, couch and several stools. A lute lying on the couch. Flowers on the table.

MRS. FORD and MRS. PAGE are discovered in conversation.

MRS. FORD The Parliament should pass a Bill imposing heavy taxes on such gross knaves as Falstaff!

QUICK. (enters laughing)
Fair gossips! (they advance to meet her. Anne enters and stands aside, sadly)

MRS. FORD and MRS. PAGE
What news?

QUICK. A dance we'll lead him!

MRS. FORD Well said!

QUICK. What's more, we'll make him pay the piper!

BOTH (as above)
Still better!

QUICK. He fell into our trap headforemost.

MRS. FORD Tell us thy story, tell us!

QUICK. 'Twas at the Garter hostelry I sought him;
I craved admission to the Knight,
That I might
Impart the message I had brought him.
Sir John was pleased promptly to grant me audience
And thus accosted me, with gesture consequential:—
"God save thee, worthy woman." "Sir, fair greeting!"

FALSTAFF

I curtsied deep and low, in manner deferential.
Full artfully I told my story, he shily winking
Sate gloating on my evry word, and deeply drinking.
To cut a long tale short, he is thoroughly persuaded that
you are both beside yourselves for love of his huge
carcase; (to Mrs. Ford) and so full soon you'll see him
wallow prostrate at your feet.

MRS. FORD When?

QUICK. Directly; here, between two and three.

MRS. FORD 'Tis two already!

ALL Between two and three!

MRS. FORD (going up stage C. and calling out)
What ho! Ned! Will! (to dame Quickly) To re-
ceive him all is ready. (again calling out) Bring
hither, quick, the basket of foul linen!

QUICK. A famous notion, truly!

MRS. FORD My Nannie, why so despondent? What ails thee,
child? (caressing Anne) Thou'rt weeping! Tell
me why. Tell thy fond mother.

ANNE (sobbing)
My father...

MRS. FORD Well, well; what next?

ANNE (bursting into tears)
My father tells me that I must marry Doctor Caius!..

MRS. FORD That stupid pedant!

QUICK. Good Lord!

MRS. PAGE That blockhead!

MRS. FORD That dullard!

ANNE That old grandfather!

ALL No, no!

ANNE I cannot wed that ancient mummy.

MRS. FORD Thou shalt be pelted by cabbage-stalks rather!

MRS. PAGE and QUICK.
Well said!

MRS. FORD Sweet, fear not!—

ANNE (jumping with joy)
Delightful! To Doctor Caius I shall not be wed!

(Enter two serving men carrying a basket full of dirty linen)

MRS. FORD Put it down there. Then, when again I call you,
promptly empty the basket into the river.

ANNE Splash!

MRS. FORD (to Anne) Silence! (to servants) Begone!

ANNE What a horrid tumble!

MRS. FORD Now set everything ready. (Places a chair near the
table) Here, a footstool.

ANNE (fetches her lute, and lays it on the table)
Here, my lute.

MRS. FORD (to Anne and Mrs. Page who set up the screen be-
tween the basket and the fireplace, and then open it)
The screen, too, let us open! That's better far. Just so!
A little wider. The scene is set; there's
nought our play to hinder.
Soon the chief actor will enter; thereafter
We shall enjoy our fill of mirthful laughter;
Laughter that soon to his senses will bring him,
Will mock and will shame him, scourge
and will sting him!
We are but women, yet, when we're put to it,
He who molests us full surely shall rue it,
For we will float him and laugh him to scorn,
And make him wish that he ne'er had been born!
And now! (to Mrs. Page) Thou hast mastered thy
part, and wilt play it.

MRS. PAGE And thou art prepared to encounter the Knight.

QUICK. I'll signal his coming...

MRS. FORD He cannot delay it.

ANNE I'll wait on the staircase, and keep out of sight!

MRS. FORD And we will prove, by harmless fun and frolic,
That honest women may be both wise and jolly;
Oft the wife who's most inclined to rollick
Appears most melancholy!

(Dame Quickly stands by window C., overlooking street)

FALSTAFF

TRIO.

(Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page, Anne, Ford)

Soon the chief actor will enter; thereafter
We all shall enjoy our fill of free mirth and gay laughter!

QUICK. (approaching the others)
Haste away; 'tis he!

MRS. FORD And where?

QUICK. Quite near the house.

ANNE Hurry!

QUICK. He's about to enter.

MRS. FORD (to Anne pointing L.)
That way, thou! (to Mrs. Page pointing R.) This way,
thou! Delay not!

ANNE Delay not! (exit hurriedly, L.)

MRS. PAGE Delay not! (exit hurriedly, R.)

QUICK. Delay not!
(exit C. —Mrs. Ford sits down by the table, and strikes a few chords on the lute)



*Enter FALSTAFF briskly; perceiving MRS. FORD
playing lute he begins to sing.*

FALST. *At last I've caught thee, my heav'nly jewel, I've caught
thee!*

(seizes Mrs. Ford by the waist; she ceases playing, puts down the lute, and arises)

Now let me die in full contentment, for long enough I've
lived. This is the height of my ambition.

MRS. FORD Oh! sweet Sir John!

FALST. Oh! blessed hour! I am lacking in graciousness
And in the mastery of flow'ry phrases
But I can speak my thoughts with frank audaciousness.

MRS. FORD And how?

FALST. Why thus. I would that Master Ford lay underneath
the daisies!

MRS. FORD And why?

FALST. And why? Can'st ask me? Then thou should'st be my
lady, and I would be thy lord.

MRS. FORD A poor sort of lady, truly!

FALSTAFF

FALST. 'Tis for a King! Right worthy thou to bear mine ancient name,
Decked out with lace and jewels, as befits a noble dame
With golden chains entwining
Thy tresses of gold still brighter,
And on thy white neck shining
Pearls that are scarcely whiter.
Thy dazzling eyes like lamps of love, fresh lit by Cupid's flame!

MRS. FORD On me all gauds would seem unsightly.
'To flaunt in silks I ne'er propose;
I wear a kerchief, knotted lightly,—
A simple girdle, a fragrant rose. (sets a rose in
her hair)

FALST. Sweet siren!

MRS. FORD Flowering Knight. (retreating)

FALST. We are alone and need fear no intrusion.

MRS. FORD What then.

FALST. Love thee.

MRS. FORD (retreating) Love is a strange delusion.

FALST. But Love ne'er fails to seize upon occasion.

MRS. FORD Sir John!

FALST. 'Tis sins but by predestination.
I love thee and thou can'st not blame me.

MRS. FORD (interrupting him)
That, stirred by passion, you should strive to shame me!

FALST. When I was page to the Duke of Norfolk's Grace
Slender of figure and comely of face,
Buoyant and light as a feather or shadow I hovered in
space.
Those were my gayest, gladdest times, forsooth!
Maydays and heydays of my lusty youth.
I was so lithesome and supple and nimble
I could have squeezed myself into a thimble!
Yes, as a page I was slender of figure and comely of
face,
Buoyant and light as a feather or shadow I hovered in
space!

MRS. FORD Alas! your vows are false ones. You love another.

FALSTAFF

FALST. Whom?

MRS. FORD Meg.

FALST. That slut! To me repulsive is her face!

MRS. FORD Can I trust to your word?

FALST. I only live
To clasp thee in my fond embrace.
I love thee! (attempts to kiss her)

MRS. FORD (resisting) Be not so bold!

FALST. (encircling her waist)
Dearest!

QUICK. (from within) Good Mistress Alice!

FALST. (lets Mrs. Ford go) Who is there!

QUICK. (enters in great agitation) Good Mistress Alice!

MRS. FORD What now?

QUICK. (panting for breath) My good lady—'tis Mistress Page
—who fain would see you—panting—trembling—
panic stricken!

FALST. The devil take her!

QUICK. She's at the door, and will not brook denial.

FALST. Where can I hide me?

MRS. FORD. There, behind the screen.

(Falstaff ensconces himself behind the screen. When he is hidden, Dame Quickly beckons Mrs. Page who enters R. in apparent agitation. Exit Dame Quickly)

MRS. PAGE Dear Alice! What a scandal! What clamour! What confusion! Lose not a single moment, but fly!

MRS. FORD Merciful Heaven! what has happened?

MRS. PAGE Good Lack! your husband hither comes, crying vengeance, and vowing...

MRS. FORD (aside to Mrs. Page)
A little louder!

MRS. PAGE ...he'll skin some man alive!

MRS. FORD (aside, as before) Nay, laugh not!

MRS. PAGE Onward still he rushes fired by burning rage, loudly invoking curses upon all women...

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD Ye heavenly powers!

MRS. PAGE He says you have concealed here a lover
Whose hiding-place he's sworn to discover.

QUICK. (re-enters, exclaiming)

Good Mistress Alice, your husband's nigh. Await him
not! He rages like a tempest, thundering, roaring,
bellowing, his forehead fiercely striking, maddened by
jealous fury.

MRS. FORD (somewhat alarmed) In earnest or in jest?

QUICK. In earnest. He forced his way through the hedge that
skirts the garden, and hard at heel a crowd followed
after; he's close at hand, I hear his step approaching
the doorway.

FORD (behind the scene)
Vile suborner!

(Falstaff, greatly alarmed, advances a step towards the door, but, hearing Ford's
voice, returns to his hiding-place, and Mrs. Ford rapidly folds the screen
around him, so that he is completely concealed).

FALST. Sure Lucifer and all his imps are compassing my ruin!



FORD (from within, shouting to his followers)

Shut all the doors closely, and block up the approaches!
(enter hurriedly Fenton and Caius) Now aid me,
kind neighbours, to hunt down this vermin. (to Caius)
By scent, like a fox, we will track him. (To Fenton)
Search thou in the corridors.

FALSTAFF

BARD. and PIST. (rush in shouting)

Hark forward ! (Fenton crosses L.)

FORD (to Bardolph and Pistol pointing L.)

Cut off his retreat, and guard ev'ry exit !

(Exeunt Bardolph and Pistol, brandishing cudgels, L.)

MRS. FORD (facing Ford)

Pray, are you distracted ? What ails you ?

FORD (perceiving the basket)

That basket ! What is in it !

MRS. FORD Dirty linen.

FORD (to Mrs. Ford)

And thou still fouler ! (hands bunch of keys to Caius who runs off L.) Take thou all the keys—open ward-
robes and cupboards ! (to Mrs. Ford) Thou hast
befouled me ! (kicks the basket) The deuce take the
tatters ! (shouting up stage C.) Let both of the Park
gates be bolted ! (pulls all the linen out of the basket,
strewing it about the floor furiously) Foul tuckers and
smocks, too. If I catch thee, vile hound ! Dirty dust-
ers ; faugh ! faugh ! ruffled coifs, too. I'll find thee !
soiled sheets and frowsy old nightcaps. But not he !

MRS. FORD. MRS. PAGE, QUICK. (together)

What a turmoil !

FORD Look under the bedsteads, in the oven, the draw-well, the
cistern, the chimneys, and the kitchen ! (rushes out L,
shouting)

MRS. FORD He's a lunatic !

QUICK. Take it coolly !

MRS. FORD How shall my luckless knight escape him ?

QUICK. In the basket.

MRS. FORD Nay, the thing will not hold him. (Falstaff cau-
tiously unfolds the screen)

He's much too portly.

FALST. (advances towards the basket) Let's see ! Yes ! I'll in !

MRS. FORD Quick, let me call the servants. (Exit)

FALSTAFF

MRS. PAGE Sir John ! You here ! *You !*

FALST. (getting into the basket)
I love thee ! thee, dearest, only ! Save me ! save me !

QUICK. (picking up the linen)
Hurry !

MRS. PAGE (to Falstaff) Hasten !

FALST. (squeezing himself by sheer force into the basket)
At last I'm in ! Pray, cover me !

QUICK. Quick now ; fill up the basket ! (Enter Anne and Fenton cautiously, *L.*)



ANNE Come hither !

FENT. What clamour !

ANNE What a strange antic (approaching screen)
Follow my footsteps !

FENT. Sure they are frantic !

ANNE Each in his fashion
Madness displays ;
Revenge their passion,

FENT. And love our craze !

ANNE (takes him by the hand leads him behind the screen,
where both conceal themselves)
Follow me, I prithee.

FENT. No eye has spied me.

ANNE Here safely I'll hide me ;

FENT. Keeping me with thee.

ANNE We must not be seen, love !

FENT. (kissing her) What should reveal us ?

ANNE Blest be the screen, love,

TOGETHER That doth conceal us.



CAIUS (shouting from within)
Vile ruffian !

FORD (from within)
Bloated minion.

FALSTAFF

CAIUS (crossing stage rapidly)
Lay hold of him !

FORD (enters hastily L., as Bardolph and Pistol rush in R.)
Vile ruffian ! (to Pistol) Found ?

PIST. No !

FORD (to Bardolph)
Found ?

BARD. Alas, no !

FORD (searching everywhere and upsetting furniture)
Haply he lurks behind some curtain !

BARD. (looking up the chimney)
He cannot be found here.

FORD And yet here he is hidden for certain !
I know it !

CAIUS Sir John, I shall laugh myself sore
When you caper aloft with the sky for your floor !

FORD (dashes at the wall-cupboard, and endeavours to force it open.)
Come out, thou fat villain, or I'll burst in the panels !

CAIUS (tries to open cupboard with key)
Surrender !

FORD Surrender, base coward, foul braggart !

BARD. and PIST. (re-enter hurriedly L.)
There's no one !

FORD (still forcing open the cupboard with Caius.)
Go look for him elsewhere. Bardolph and Pistol rush out again, L) Surrender, base coward ! (breaks open the cupboard) He's not there !

CAIUS (opening chest under couch)
Come out, then ! He's not there ! (runs about the room, prying and searching)
Futile boaster ! Poltroon ! Have a care !

FORD and CAIUS (together)
Base coward ! Vile braggart ! Fat villain ! Foul brute !

(Ford tears open the table-drawer, quite beside himself)

Anne and Fenton, still behind the screen, exchange an audible kiss, just as the turmoil subsides into a momentary silence. Kiss heard.)

FORD (under his breath, looking at screen)
'Tis he !

CAIUS 'Tis he !

FAIRSTAFF

FORD (cautiously approaching screen) If I catch you !
CAIUS (similarly) If I seize you !
FORD If I snatch you !
CAIUS If I squeeze you !
FORD I will thrash you !
CAIUS I will beat you like a hound !
FORD And break and smash you,
CAIUS Aye, and dash you upon the ground !
FORD You shall pay for all your bragging, if I catch you.
CAIUS If I snatch you !
PISTOL (re-enter L. with neighbours) I can't see him !
BARDOLPH (re-enter L. with neighbours) I can't find him !
FORD (to Bardolph, Pistol and neighbours) S-sh ! All hither !
I have found him. (under his breath, mysteriously,
pointing to screen) With my wife he there is hidden.
BARDOLPH Let us thrash him, grind him, pound him !
FORD Silence, thou noisy rascal !

ENSEMBLE

ANNE.

While the old people make all this riot
We exchange kisses in peace and in quiet.
Lovers delight in noise and confusion,
Their sweetest bliss they find in calm seclusion.

FENTON.

Dear smiling maiden ! Love interceding,
Thy heart has yielded to my fond pleading.
When first I saw thee, my love was thine,
And now I know, sweet, that thine is mine !

QUICKLY.

Now let us be busy, the linen arranging,
And give him a chance his position of changing.

MRS. PAGE.

Let's pile the clothes on him, and thoroughly hide him,
Lest some irretrievable ill should betide him !

QUICKLY.

Till now his suspicions have led him astray.
Defeat us he shall not, though vex us he may !

FALSTAFF

MRS. PAGE.

The risk of a jest is the liveliest part,
It raises the spirits and gladdens the heart !

FALSTAFF (thrusting out his face) I'm stifling !

QUICKLY (pushing him down) Lie quiet, lie quiet !

MRS. PAGE Be careful, they're prying !

QUICKLY If Ford should espy you, he'll kill you !

FORD Did ye hear their shameful kissing ?

BARDOLPH Now we've snared the slimy serpent ;
Snakes betray themselves by hissing.

FORD Let's consult ! Before the tussle
I would ask your counsel further.

CAIUS If he exert his muscle, there'll be broken bones and
murther !

FORD I've a masterly conception,
Hear and mark what I have planned
Of the right wing take direction,
(to Pistol and servants)
While the left wing I command.
(to Bardolph and Caius)
And the others, from behind him,
Will lay hold of him and bind him !
(to the rest)

CAIUS, BARDOLPH, PISTOL AND NEIGHBOURS.
Bravo, bravo, great tactician,
We approve your proposition !

FORD (to Caius) Must I drain the bitter chalice ?
(approaching screen)
Hear their billing and their cooing ?
Vile seducer ! 'Tis my Alice—
Whom the wretch is hotly wooing.

CAIUS (to Ford) Yes, I hear them.
Who in wedlock seeks for pleasure
Naught to gain has, all to lose ;
Hapless friend, for all your treasure
I would not stand in your shoes !

FALSTAFF

FENTON.

The torch of Hymen is burning brightly.

ANNE.

His cherubs round me are hov'ring lightly.
(all ensemble)

ANNE.

In thought and action,
Asking, denying,
Smiling and sighing,
Love is distraction !

FALSTAFF I'm frying !

QUICKLY AND MRS. PAGE (together) Keep under ! Lie quiet !

FALSTAFF I'm stewing ! I'm melting ! Alack, I shall die if I
may not take breath !

QUICKLY Keep under, keep under ! Unless you keep quiet
you're doomed to death !
(covers Falstaff up with the dirty linen)

MRS. PAGE (ironically) Strange, that nobody offers to fan
him !

MRS. PAGE Be quiet ! To laugh were to make them suspect us ;
Unless we are careful they'll surely detect us.

A husband who's jealous,
A swain over-zealous.

CAIUS He whose wife is wont to play him
Many a plaguey prank and trick,
Should compel her to obey him
With a horsewhip or a stick.

BARDOLPH Harken to these hidden lovers, here in privacy dis-
porting,
How caressingly they murmur, like two turtledoves
a-courting,
Now his suit he's fondly pressing
And her whisper you can hear,
As her love she is confessing
To her portly cavalier.

FORD They believe that none can hear them,
Hear their kisses and their sighs ;
But a storm is brewing near them
Fraught with terrible surprise.

PISTOL Listen to his heavy breathing
As he labours to respire,
While his very fat is seething
With intemperate desire.
He will pipe in other fashion
When we have him by the throat,
And if singing be his passion,
We will make him change his note.

FALSTAFF

NEIGHBOURS, SERVANTS, ETC.

Tread on tiptoe; don't alarm him, nor arouse his least suspicion,
We must fall on him and seize him while defenceless his position;
If he fall, he can't escape us; nought on earth can save him then,
And we'll teach him not to meddle with the wives of honest men!

FORD Silence! Look out! Now is our time! Attention!
 Your eyes on me!

One! Two! Three! (throws down screen)

CAIUS 'Tis not he!
(Anne and Fenton are discovered much embarrassed)

ALL THE MEN.

Strange situation!
As in the sunshine opens the flower,
So my heart blossoms in this blissful hour.
Sweet is that passion-flower!
Yes I love thee!

FENTON 'Neath those dark lashes Love's lamps are beaming
Like hidden jewels in darkness gleaming;
Lips like twin rosebuds fraught with perfume,
Cheeks like ripe peaches in their velvet bloom.
Say, dost thou love me?
I love thee!
From all such tormentors may Heaven protect us!
Let's speak in a whisper, and rivet our eyes
On Falstaff the Fat, in our basket who fries.

QUICKLY We're quiet! Restrain we our laughter,
 Our fun will come after
The end of the riot.
Our captive is fretting
And puffing and blowing,
His carcase is sweating,
His wits are fast going.
So foul his transgressions, in word and in deed,
That soundly to souse him is kindness indeed.

FALSTAFF Ugh! basket accursed! I'm choking!
 Convey me away!
Rescue me! Save me! (hides himself again)

MRS. FORD, MRS. PAGE *and* QUICKLY.

Keep quiet! Be silent! The creature is restive!
He's crazy with vexation!
And consternation!

FALSTAFF

FORD Vile, disobedient daughter! (to Anne furiously)
Shall I be thus defied? (to Fenton)
Deceit in vain you've taught her;
She ne'er shall be your bride!

(Anne runs off affrighted. Exit Fenton hastily C.)

BARD. (Runs up stage.)
He's there! Seize him!

FORD Where? Lay hold of him!

PIST. There, on the staircase!

ALL THE MEN

Hark, forward! (they rush up stairs, C.)

QUICK. What turmoil and riot!

MRS. FORD Ned! Will! Tom! Isaac! (re-enter Anne with
four serving men and a page) Here! Hasten!
Quickly empty this basket out of window and into
the river—there, just by the bulrushes, and near that
busy group of washerwomen.

ANNE, MRS. PAGE and QUICK.

Yes, yes; just there!

ANNE (to men striving to lift basket)
The load is somewhat heavy.

MRS. FORD (to the Page)

Call thou my husband hither. (Exit page by staircase, C.)

(Anne and Dame Quickly stand looking at the men, who at length have hoisted
up the basket.)

MRS. FORD (to Mrs. Page)

We will explain to him how we've been joking,
And when he sees poor Falstaff sadly soaking,
He'll ne'er again indulge in jealous croaking!

QUICK. (to serving men) Now then!

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD and MRS. PAGE

Together !

ANNE I heard the basket crack. (the basket is hoisted higher)

TOGETHER Up with it ! Be ready ! Be steady ! Ah ! Ah ! He's
over !

(Falstaff, basket and linen are tumbled out of window)

TOGETHER *Pantrac !*

(Screams and laughter of women outside and inside. Ford and the other men rush in. Mrs. Ford takes Ford by the arm, and leads him hurriedly to window.)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

SCENE I.

A street, exterior of the *Garter Hotel*, showing the sign and motto: *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. A bench near the doorway. Time, sunset.

FALST. (is seated on the bench meditating. He rouses himself, turns towards the entrance of the inn and summons the host,)

Ho! House, within there! (gloomily reflecting)
Wicked world! Treacherous world! Vile world!
(enter Host) Worthy host, a beaker of burnt sherry.
(exit Host) For this, then, so many years have I
flourished, gallant and gay, the pearl of Knighthood;
that I should be packed into a basket, and then ducked
in the river with foul and reeking linen, just like a
mongrel dog or litter of blind kittens! And had not
this fair roundness like cork or bladder floated, sure I
had perished! An ugly ending! Water distends me!
Vilest world! The good old days are past. All is
decadent. Go thy way, Jack Falstaff, as long as thy
life endureth; with thee shall disappear forever the
type of honest manhood! That I should thus be
treated! Heav'n give me grace! I wax too portly;
gray my beard is turning. (re-enter Host with a large
tankard of mulled wine, which he sets on the table
and exit) I'll mix a pint of sack with a gallon of
Thames water. (sips, then drinks deeply) Sweet 'tis
to drink good wine while basking in the sunshine, free
from constriction.

FALSTAFF

For good wine dispels all the darksome vapors of melancholy, brightens the eye, quickens thought; from the lip ascends to the brain, and there wakens up the tiny weaver of fancies, and a sable sprite lurking in the skulls of toppers and trolling joyous lays that ring through the sky, up to the spheres, till the gladdened earth softly echoes the gay strain of the minstrel, and Song pervades the world.

(Enter Dame Quickly, interrupting Falstaff.)



QUICK. Sir, fair greeting! Good Mistress Alice...

FALST. (rising in anger)
The foul fiend fly away with your Mistress Alice! Enough
I've had of Alice! Too much I've had of Alice!

QUICK. You are mistaken...

FALST. A cockatrice! Still my shoulders and ribs are black and blue with sore bruises! My very bones are aching from having been closely compressed, like a good bilbo, in the circumference of a peck, hilt to point, heel to head!
What a ferment? What a smelting!

A man of my complexion
As butter prone to melting,
A chronic liquefaction!

When I was hotly stewing and seething and fiercely glowing, in the river they plunged me! Base rascals!

(Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page, Ford, Calus and Fenton advance from behind a house L., alternately peeping out, one and another, and concealing themselves.)

QUICK. She is blameless, of that be certain.

FALST. Away with thee!

QUICK. The fault lay with those dullard, those stupid varlets! And she's lamenting, weeping, her lot bewailing! Unhappy lady! She loves you. Read this, pray. (gives a letter which Falstaff takes and reads.)

MRS. FORD and FORD (under their breath, peeping out C.)
He's reading.

ANNE Again we shall ensnare him.

MRS. PAGE (to Mrs. Ford)
Conceal thyself!

FALSTAFF

CAIUS He's reading.

FORD Yes, truly; the bait he swallows.

FALST. (reading aloud)
To-night in Windsor Park, at midnight, I shall await thee, in disguise, clad from head to foot as the Sable Huntsman, by Herne's Oak thou wilt tarry.

QUICK. True love mystery loveth.
To meet you, fair Alice herself must avail
Of a dismal old legendary tale.
Near that oak is a trysting-place of witch and elf.
Herne, the Black Hunter, hanged himself
At midnight to its topmost bough—
There are some who believe that he haunts it now!

FALST. (takes Dame Quickly by the arm, to lead her into the inn)
Prithee, in! there we can talk at leisure;
Come; I await thy pleasure.

QUICK. (enters inn with Falstaff, continuing her story mysteriously)
Just as the chimes the hour of twelve are sounding...



FORD We've got him!

MRS. FORD (mimicking Dame Quickly, advances C. with the others)
Just as the chimes the hour of twelve are sounding,
When ev'ry sad, unhallowed spirit walks,
And ghostly forms appear, the oak surrounding,
Through Windsor Forest the Sable Huntsman stalks!
He glides along, so slowly, slowly, slowly,
With eyelids closed, like one who's soundly sleeping;
His face is deadly pale...

ANNE Spectre unholy!

MRS. PAGE Tell me no more! With fright my flesh is creeping!

MRS. FORD An idle tale, to froward babes told times without number
By twilight, with bated breath, to soothe them to slumber!

(Together with Anne and Mrs. Page.)

A wronged woman's vengeance it fitly may serve!

His face is deadly pale, and just as he is nearing
The spot on which his life he grimly ended,
Fairy wands wave, and, on his brows appearing,
Spout forth two mighty branching antlers !

FORD Splendid!
These broad antlers shall yield me joy and gladness.

MRS. FORD Thou deservest admonishment
For all thy jealous madness !

FORD Forgive me ! I've endured sufficient punishment.

MRS. FORD If e'er I should detect thee
 Essaying to discover
 In a nutshell, an imaginary lover
 Why, then—Heaven protect thee !
 But time is flying ; our wits must now be busy.

MRS. PAGE Let's consult.

FORD And arrange our masquerading.

MRS. FORD My Nannie !

ANNE What is your will?

MRS. FORD Thou shalt be drest as the Queen of all the Fairies, enrobed in gauze white as the snow, and thy waist girdled with roses.

ANNE And then I'll sing and dance, sweetly and featly.

MRS. FORD (to Mrs. Page)
Clad in green thou shalt be, nymph of the woodlands ;
disguised as an enchantress shall be Dame Quickly.

ANNE (joyously)
Naught could be better ! (Daylight fades into twilight.)

Mrs. Ford I'll dress and drill a score of tiny lads and little lasses, who shall play the parts of elves and imps and sprites and Jack-o'-lanterns.

The Knight they shall surround and soundly swinge him,
Make mock of him and singe him...

ANNE, MRS. PAGE and FENTON Singe him ! Singe him !

Mrs. Ford In torment he shall languish
Until, subdued by anguish,
 For mercy he shall pray.
Then we will undeceive him,
With quips and jibes aggrrieve him,
Reveal ourselves, and leave him
 Before the dawn of day.

QUICK. 'Tis nightfall.

MRS. PAGE Let's go home.

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD Hard by the oak we shall meet, then, at midnight.

FENT. Ay, surely.

ANNE Nought could be better! (joyously) What a charming adventure!

ALL (together)

Farewell! (exeunt Mrs. Ford, Anne and Fenton L.)

MRS. FORD (from within to Mrs. Page about to exit R.)

Wilt thou provide the lanterns?

MRS. PAGE Ay!

FORD (secretly to Caius, standing close by the inn, whence enters Dame Quickly, who, seeing the two men in conference, stops to listen)

Be of good heart, for thou shalt wed my daughter. Dost thou remember what dress she will be wearing?

CAIUS Girdled with roses, and arrayed in white garments.

MRS. FORD (from within)

Do not forget the vizards!

MRS. PAGE (from within, R.)

No, surely; nor thou the wands and tapers!

FORD (to Caius)

My plan I've laid with due precaution. When our jest shall be ended, come both to me; but keep faces hidden—hers by her veil, thine in a cowl enshrouded—and I will bless ye then as bride and bridegroom!

CAIUS (takes Ford's arm)

We're agreed, then.

QUICK. (from the threshold of the inn)

What ninnies! (makes a mocking gesture, and exit hurriedly, R.) Fair Annie!

ANNE (from within)

What now?

QUICK. The fairy song; be sure you have it ready.

ANNE 'Tis so already.

MRS. FORD (from within)

Do not be late!

QUICK. (still farther off)

Who first arrives, must wait!

(Darkness sets in)

END SCENE I. ACT III.

SCENE II.

WINDSOR PARK BY MOONLIGHT.

Herne's Oak, C. A sawpit up stage C. Clumps of saplings and
and flowering shrubs. Horns are heard, sounding afar off.

Enter Fenton.

FENT. From fervid lips the song of love arises,
Through the stillness of night afar resounding,
And from some lofty, hollow rock rebounding
Is echoed back again in soft reprises.
Its ev'ry phrase and accent, thus transmuted,
Are sweetened, mellowed too, by reproduction,
And passion's loudest strains, subtly commuted,
Become mere whispers in their course of refluxion.
Echo is fond of songs ; quickly she learns them,
Sings them once, twice or thrice, and then returns
them.
And thus the lover's kiss should be requited.
Kissing is fraught with such exquisite pleasure.

ANNE (within) Bliss never palling and sweet beyond measure !

FENT. But songs expire on lips that are united !

(Enter Mrs. Ford, unexpectedly, not in disguise, but carrying a black mask and robe on her
arm. She stops Fenton)

MRS. FORD Prithee, gently ! Put on this robe monastic.

(Enter Dame Quickly disguised as a witch and carrying a broomstick)

FENT. What freak is this ? (enter Anne, as the Fairy Queen)

ANNE Do as she tells you !

MRS. FORD The mask, too ! (Fenton puts on the disguise)

FALSTAFF

ANNE He looks exactly like a truant Trappist.

MRS. FORD (hastily helping Fenton to fasten on the mask)

The trick my husband proposes to play you must be cleverly turned to your advantage.

FENT. Explain yourself.

MRS. FORD Ask no idle questions ; obey me ! An opportunity foregone recurs not. Who is to personate the bride ?

(to Dame Quickly)

QUICK. A mischievous, long-nosed stripling, who hates Doctor Caius.

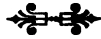
(enter Mrs. Page drest in green robes, and masked)

MRS. PAGE In the sawpit I've hidden all the urchins. We're ready !

MRS. FORD I hear the fat man coming.

ALL Vanish !

(Exit L.)



(As the first stroke of midnight sounds, enter Falstaff wearing a pair of antlers and a heavy cloak)

FALST. O ! Two ! Three ! Four ! Five ! Six ! Seven ! Eight ! Nine ! Ten ! Eleven ! Twelve ! 'Tis midnight. Here is the oak. Pow'r's divine, protect me ! Great Jove ! thou who took'st on thee the form of a bull for love of fair Europa—thy brows were horned. Our elders teach us virtue and decorum ; but Love transforms us into beasts and brutifies our morals ! (listens) 'Tis her light step approaching. (Enter Mrs. Ford, L. C.) Sweet Alice, thy lover calls thee ! Hither ! with love I'm burning.

MRS. FORD Sir John !

FALST. Thou art mine own doe !

MRS. FORD What effervescent love !

FALST. Hither ! I glow and quiver ! I am thy stag, thy fattest of bucks, lord of the forest. Let the skies shower truffles, radishes, and fennel, and let me feed upon them, but drink of love only ! Are we alone, sweet ?

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD No; Meg, through the forest tripping, is near at hand.

FALST. A twofold love-adventure. Let her come, too! Now quarter me; yes, like a roasted roebuck, now carve me! For all my pains I am rewarded, I love thee, love thee.

MRS. PAGE (from within)
Help, help! here come the witches!

MRS. FORD (feigning terror)
An outcry! Alas! Flee from them.

FALST. (alarmed)
Whither?

MRS. FORD Kind Heav'n, forgive my sore offending (exit hurriedly R.)

FALST. (leaning against the trunk of Herne's Oak)
Old Nick will not connive at my damnation!

ANNE (from within)
Woodnymphs, dryads, goblins, fly-by-nights and fairies!
Here ye may freely practice, in joyous medley,
Your spells, freaks, and vagaries.

FALST. Spirits of Darkness! to look on them is deadly!
(lies face downwards stretched at full length on the ground)

CHORUS OF WOMEN (afar off)
Woodnymphs! Dryads! Fairies!
(enter Anne as the fairy-queen, followed by nine white and nine blue fairies)



(Enter all the characters, disguised, and twenty-four fairies, large and small, who surround Anne. The men are grouped R., the women L.)

ANNE
From secret caves and bowers
Emerge, your locks entwining
With fronds of fern, and flowers
While yet the moon is shining.

FALSTAFF

Then dance, fays, lightly and featly,
While singing your elfish rhymes,
Words that are wedded sweetly
To tunes of olden times.

CHORUS OF FAIRIES

The forest slumbers; its leafy boughs their shadows spread,
Dark green beneath the azure sky; an island sunk in
ocean's bed.

ANNE We wander in the moonlight, and cull the flow'rets tender;
Oping their folded petals, fragrant perfumes they render.
With lilies, violets, roses,
We spell our words of power;
Each fairy touch discloses
The secret of some flower.
Delicate revelations
Such as the rosebuds tell
Serve us for incantations
Furnish full many a spell!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES

Now stealthily advancing, let us at once repair
To the gigantic oak-tree, the Sable Hunter's lair!

(All the fairies, and their Queen, slowly approach Herne's Oak, singing)

ANNE The flow'rs have taught us many a spell!

BAED. (stumbles against Falstaff and signals the fairies to halt)
Stay awhile!

PIST. (advancing)
Who goes there?

FALST. Good lack.

QUICK. (touching Falstaff with her broomstick)
A man!

THE FOUR WOMEN and CHORUS OF FAIRIES
A man!

FORD Just like a stag he's antlered!

PIST. And round as any pumpkin!

BAED. As Leviathan monstrous! (kicking Falstaff) Up with
thee! Arise!

FALST. Unless a crane you bring me, I cannot!

FORD He is too heavy!

QUICK. He's corrupt!

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD, MRS. PAGE *and* ANNE
And impure!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES
He's corrupt and impure!

BARD. (gesticulating like a sorcerer)
Straightway I'll exorcise him!

MRS. FORD (to Anne while Dr. Caius is hunting about the stage.
Fenton and Dame Quickly stand before Anne and
conceal her)

Danger is nigh; evade it. Old Dr. Caius now seeks thee.

ANNE We'll find some place of safety.

(retires up stage with Fenton, guarded by Mrs. Ford and Dame Quickly)

QUICK. And swift return when I shall call upon ye!

(Anne, Fenton, Dame Quickly disappear among foliage)

BARD. (continuing his incantation)
Evil spirits! Grim goblins! Dusky night-moths! Dark
vampires!

Poison-fraught offspring of the marshes infernal!

You may rightfully

Torment him frightfully

And scratch him spitefully!

With steely talons!

FALST. A foul-scented wizard! No polecat more pestilent!

(Enter C. boys disguised as imps, and attack Falstaff; other goblins and demons
appear from different entrances, striking tambourines and triangles; many of
them carry small red lamps)

CHORUS OF SPIRITS *and* IMPS (rolling Falstaff over and over, up
and down stage)

Rumble him! Tumble him!

(the fairies pinch his arms and cheeks and flog him with nettles)

MRS. FORD, MRS. PAGE *and* ANNE

Pinching him,

'Twitching him,

Wrenching him,

Clenching him,

Tweek him and shake him

Till bellow you make him!

(the little fairies dance round him, some capering and stamping on his back)

FALST. (vainly struggling to defend himself)

Oh! Oh!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES (beating tambourines, drums, etc.)

Now practice, your thumbs on him,

And beat fairy drums on him!

Then tear him and tatter him,

And soil and bespatter him!

Let's prick him with bulrushes, keen pointed as lances,

And on his huge abdomen perform all our dances!

Mosquitoes and midges fresh torments shall bring him!

And sound their shrill trumpets, and fret him, and sting
him!

(the turmoil ceases)

MRS. PAGE, MRS. FORD *and* QUICK. Pinching him.
 Twitching him,
 Wrenching him,
 Clenching him,
 Tweak him and shake him !
 Till bellow you make him !

FALST. Oh ! Oh !

MRS. PAGE, MRS. FORD, QUICK. *and* CHORUS OF FAIRIES
 Scrape him and scrub at him,
 Rub off the rust of him !
 Hammer and dub at him !
 Cool the hot lust of him !
 Pricking him,
 Nicking him,
 Wrenching him,
 Clenching him,
 Pinching him,
 Twitching him,
 Tweaking him,
 Shaking him !

CHORUS OF SPIRITS *and* IMPS

And fret him, and sting him !
 FORD *and* CAIUS Vile dog !
 BARD. *and* PIST. Poltroon !
 FORD *and* CAIUS Huge hog
 BARD *and* PIST. Obese
 FORD *and* CAIUS Thy sins
 BARD. *and* PIST. Confess
 ALL (together) Upon thy knees !
 FORD Carcase all stuffed out !
 MRS. FORD Features all puffed out !
 BARD. Crusher of bed-gear !
 QUICK. Rumpler of head-gear !
 PIST. Deepest of drinkers !
 MRS. PAGE Meanest of slinkers !
 CAIUS Robber and brawler !
 FORD Tripple-chinn'd crawler !

ALL Say, dost repent thee ?

(Bardolph strikes Falstaff with Dame Quickly's broomstick)

FALST. Alas ! I repent me !

FORD, CAIUS, BARD. *and* PIST.

Reptile pernicious,
 Faithless and vicious !
 Repent !

FALST.

Content !

BARD. (putting his face close to Falstaff's)

Reform thy conduct flighty :

FALST.

Thou reek'st of aqua vitæ !

FALSTAFF

MRS. FORD, MRS. PAGE and QUICK.

Heaven vouchsafe to chasten him
Or to perdition hasten him !
Deeply humiliate him !
Heavily castigate him !

FALST. But save his soul, kind Heaven !

FORD, CAIUS, BARD. and PIST.

Carcase all stuffed out... (etc. ut supra)

CHORUS OF SPIRITS and IMPS Pinching him... (etc. ut supra)

CAIUS, BARD., FORD and PIST.

Mass of impurity !
What say'st thou ?

FALST. It is well !

CAIUS, BARD., FORD and PIST.

Lump of obesity !
What sayest thou ?

FALST. It is well !

CAIUS, BARD., FORD and PIST.

Hogshead of Malvoisie !
What say'st thou !

FALST. Let it be so !

BARD.

Bloated offender !
Shameless pretender !

FALST. Away ! thou reekest !

CAIUS, BARD., FORD and PIST.

Lying traducer !
Futile seducer !

FALST. Why, then, so be it !

BARD. (vehemently)

The devil will take him,
And shake him,

And bake him ! (in his excitement he
throws off his cowl)

FALST. (rising)

Hades ! Erebus ! Acheron ! 'Tis the pestilent Bardolph !
(threatening Bardolph, who retreats before him)

Nose all vermillion,
Shaped like a pillion !
Snuffler vociferous !
Rushlight pestiferous !
Salamander !

Ignis fatuus !

Ruffianly pander !
Miserable gander !
Thou thing of fustian
In slow combustion !
Vampire, thief, and traitor !
Purple-snouted alligator !

Dixisti ! If I have wronged him, may ev'ry unjust word
rise up against me !

ALL (together) Bravo !

FALSTAFF

FALST. (approaching Ford with an ironical bow)
Dearly beloved Ford ! Which of us is the dupe ?

FORD (pointing to Dr. Caius) He !

CAIUS (to Ford) Thou !

FORD No !

CAIUS Yes !

BARD. (to Ford and Dr. Caius) Ye !

FENT. (to Ford and Dr. Caius) They !

CAIUS (standing by Ford) We !

FALST. Ye two, surely !

MRS. Ford (placing Falstaff by Ford and Dr. Caius)

No ! all ye three ! (to Ford)

Look at these children (pointing to Anne and Fenton)
and grant them your pardon !

ANNE (to Ford, folding her hands)
Dearest father, forgive us !

FORD He who cannot avert his own defeating
Should gaily take his beating.

(embracing Anne and Fenton)
Thus in my arms I press you,
Thus forgive you, and bless you !

FALST. One rousing lay, to end our frolic !

FORD Then with John Falstaff we'll carouse and rollick !

ALL (together) Stupendous ! Stupendous !

FINALE.

(All characters and Chorus)

Jesting is man's vocation ;
Wise is he who is jolly,
Ready to laugh upon slight provocation,
Proof against dull melancholy.
Each man makes fun of his neighbour
The merry world around :—
Solace for pain and for labour
In gay laughter is found !

CURTAIN.

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| 2. " " " " | Eri tu che macchiavi (It was thou the destroyer) |
| 3. Barbiere di Siviglia, Il | Largo al factotum (Hey, for the town's factotum so rare) |
| 4. Don Carlos | Ella giammai m'amò (No! she has never lov'd me) |
| 5. " " " | Per me giunto è il dì supremo ('Tis that day I so long awaited) |
| 6. Don Giovanni | Deh, vieni alla finestra (Come, open wide your window) |
| 7. Due Foscari, I | Questa dunque è l'iniqua mercede (So my valor and my victories are crowned) |
| 8. Ernani | Oh, de' verd' anni miei (Fair hours of youth and pleasure) |
| 9. Falstaff | Quand' ero paggio (When I was page) |
| 10. Figliuol Prodigio, Il | Raccogli e calma (Calmly, serenely) |
| 11. Forza del Destino, La | Son Pereda, son ricco d'onore (I, Pereda, for honor am fated) |
| 12. " " " " | Urna fatale del mio destino (Ill omen'd coffer that holds my secret) |
| 13. Germania | Ferito, prigionier (I'm prisoner and wounded) |
| 14. " " | Ascolta! . . . Io morirò (Oh! hear me! . . . Now I must die!) |
| 15. Gianni Schicchi | Ah! che zucconi! (Oh! foolish blockheads!) |
| 16. Gioconda, La | O monumento! (O mighty monument!) |
| 17. " " " | Pescator, affonda l'esca (Fisherman, thy bait now lower) |
| 18. Macbeth | Pietà, rispetto, amore (Compassion, love and kindness) |
| 19. Nerone | Vivete in pace (Live in peace) |
| 20. " " | Laggiù fra i
Genesareti |
| 21. Otello | Credo (Credo) |
| 22. " " | Era la notte (It was the night) |
| 23. Rigoletto | Pari siamo (We are equal) |
| 24. " " | Cortigiani, vil
lani |
| 25. Simon Boccanegra | Il lacerato spir
ito |
| 26. Tabarro, Il | Nulla! Silenzio |
| 27. Tannhauser | Wie Todesahnung |
| 28. Tosca | Se la giurata fe
delta |
| 29. Traviata, La | Di Provenza il
fiorito |
| 30. Trovatore, Il | Il balen del suo
sguardo |

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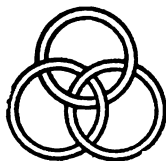
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